



NOAA's National Ocean Service

## ROUND TABLES

# SUMMARY: INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

On April 15, 2004, NOS Assistant Administrator Dr. Richard W. Spinrad hosted the fifth NOS Constituent Roundtable, which focused on "International Issues." Sixteen constituents from academia, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and federal and state agencies joined Dr. Spinrad and NOS staff to discuss how NOS could strengthen its role as a global leader for integrated management of the ocean through ocean observations, integrated coastal management, and marine protected area (MPA) management.

### Opening Remarks

In his opening remarks, Dr. Spinrad noted that engaging with international partners is an essential element of the mission of NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS) to enhance integrated management of the ocean and coastal waters in the U.S. and around the world. NOAA's Ocean Council, chaired by Dr. Spinrad, is developing a response to the preliminary report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy that recognizes the importance of U.S. global ocean leadership. He noted the following key challenges to integrated ocean and coastal management:

- *Achieving a predictive understanding of coastal ecosystems and the ocean's role in climate change depends on the development of regional to global networks that link analysis and management in more effective and timely ways.*
- *While the USA has 30 years' experience to share in developing and implementing integrated coastal zone management, continued coastal population growth and accelerating economic pressures both here and worldwide require that all countries innovate and better manage the growing and competing uses of marine resources.*
- *The World Summit on Sustainable Development's goal to build representative marine protected area networks based on sound science and international law by 2012 challenges the marine community to improve marine and coastal governance both within and between nations.*

Dr. Spinrad then presented an overview of NOS partnerships with UN agencies such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and UNEP, as well as partnerships with other governments, the scientific community, NGOs and others. These partnerships leverage diverse capabilities and resources to forecast environmental change, respond to oil spills, conduct cooperative research on marine pollution, promote safe and environmentally sound marine transportation, enhance coastal and marine management, and help nations to modernize their geodetic infrastructure and hydrographic capabilities. He invited Roundtable participants to identify ways that NOS could strengthen its global leadership and contribution to integrated management of the oceans.

### Constituent Observations

Participants addressed how NOS could help build international capacity for integrated management of the ocean. Several common themes were identified, including program sustainability, ecological resilience, program coherence, capacity building through partnerships, and integration of observations and management.



# N O S

W o r k i n g f o r A m e r i c a ' s C o a s t s

### ***Sustainability***

Participants noted that the broad global leadership agenda of NOS requires sustained international engagement over time. International activities should emphasize: building local capacity as an integral part of project implementation; measures to define and resolve local-national governance challenges that are impediments to success; a variety of performance indicators to assess the impacts of management on both people and the environment; and financial sustainability of projects to maintain their economic and environmental benefits over time.

### ***Ecological Resilience***

Participants noted the increased international and national priority on ecosystem-based management and its implications for managing biological resources and human communities at appropriate scales. As an example, coastal and MPA managers can mitigate the impacts of large-scale threats, address local threats, and enhance ecosystem recovery by assuring that coral reefs are protected and well managed. An improved understanding of ecosystem integrity, connectivity within and among managed areas, and observational models that forecast environmental conditions will catalyze the creation of mutually replenishing networks of MPAs, nested within systems of ocean and coastal governance, that enhance the recovery prospects of the component MPAs.

### ***Program Coherence***

Participants identified a need to integrate international leadership “vertically,” from local capacity building in the application of management tools, to national ocean governance policy, to international policy development through treaties and intergovernmental coordination. Further, NOS should expand international commitments within its main program lines to foster international engagement, in particular, in problem-solving and capacity-building techniques.

### ***Capacity-building through Partnerships***

Participants acknowledged that the decentralization of coastal management creates special challenges. Certainly, NOS’s national experience can contribute to national ocean policy dialogues in other nations. Participants also noted that NOS could make a more substantive contribution by undertaking partnerships to solve specific local problems. Further, they noted that international networks of coastal and MPA managers should engage U.S. management at the state level in international exchanges to enrich U.S. and international management experience.

### ***Integration of Observations and Management***

Participants noted that ocean observations require long-term financial and programmatic commitment if they are to have an impact on management. To foster a national commitment to implement observation programs, NOAA needs to strengthen the integration of management goals with observation programs, improve the integration of biological and physical environmental data, enhance the accessibility of existing data (e.g., via a centralized directory of NOAA data sources), increase resources to support the coastal observing system, and broaden governmental and NGO partnerships. Mission goals should emphasize management, protection, and public safety. Further, an integrated data management program would ensure that data becomes a key component of decision-makers’ support tools.

## **Closing Comments**

A significant portion of world economic activity and a wide range of services, amenities and social benefits depend on the sustainable use of ocean resources. For many countries, marine resources and services provide 3 to 5 percent of their Gross National Product. In a few countries, the percentage is much higher. Moreover, these numbers underestimate the value of marine resource conservation for food security, employment, recreation, cultural integrity, national security, trade and transport, energy, and environmental services.

Dr. Spinrad thanked the participants for identifying opportunities for NOS to improve its international activities, particularly those related to ocean and coastal management, MPA management, and ocean and coastal observing systems—all priority international issues identified by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, and related to commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. He encouraged Roundtable participants to continue their existing partnerships with NOS, and welcomed opportunities to continue the dialogue on implementing the suggestions that emerged from the discussion.